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Financing of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara

Budget performance for the period from 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2013 and proposed budget for the period from 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015 of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara

Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions

Appropriation for 2012/13	$58,253,000
Expenditure for 2012/13	$56,481,400
Unencumbered balance for 2012/13	$1,771,600
Appropriation for 2013/14	$58,404,000
Projected expenditure 2013/14[a]	$58,104,700
Estimated unencumbered balance for 2013/14[a]	$299,300
Proposal submitted by the Secretary-General for 2014/15	$54,019,300
Recommendation of the Advisory Committee for 2014/15	$53,879,600

[a] Estimates as at 31 January 2014.

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I. Introduction

1. **The recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions contained in paragraphs 23 and 32 below would entail a reduction of $139,700 to the proposed budget for the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), for the period from 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015.**

2. During its consideration of the financing of MINURSO, the Advisory Committee met with representatives of the Secretary-General, who provided additional information and clarification, concluding with written responses received on 25 March 2014. The documents reviewed and those used for background by the Committee in its consideration of the financing of MINURSO are listed at the end of the present report. The Committee's detailed comments and recommendations on the findings of the Board of Auditors on United Nations peacekeeping operations and on the overview of the financing of United Nations peacekeeping operations can be found in its related reports (A/68/843 and A/68/782, respectively).

II. Budget performance report for the period from 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2013

3. In its resolution 66/278, the General Assembly appropriated an amount of $58,253,000 gross ($55,972,400 net) for the maintenance of MINURSO for the period from 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2013. Total expenditure for the period amounted to $56,481,400 gross ($54,207,600 net), resulting in an unencumbered balance of $1,771,600 gross ($1,764,800 net), which represents, in gross terms, 3.0 per cent of the total appropriation.

4. The underexpenditure was owing mainly to lower than budgeted requirements under: (a) international staff ($1,108,900, or 6.1 per cent) as the result of an actual vacancy rate of 6 per cent for international staff as compared with the budgeted rate of 2 per cent, and reduced requirements for common staff costs owing to the status of the Mission as a family duty station; (b) national staff ($367,300, or 6.5 per cent) owing to the depreciation of the local currency against the United States dollar; and (c) lower than budgeted requirements of some $700,000 under air transportation, owing to the decommissioning of a fixed-wing aircraft. The underexpenditure was partly offset by higher than planned expenditure of some $461,400 under information technology owing to the replacement of desktops and laptops, as well as requirements to support implementation of Umoja and International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS). A detailed analysis of variances is provided in section IV of the relevant budget performance report (A/68/608).

5. In paragraph 17 of the performance report, the Secretary-General indicates that the Moroccan dirham and the Algerian dinar depreciated by 4 per cent and 9 per cent, respectively, against the United States dollar as compared with the budgeted exchange rates. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the depreciation of the local currency had commenced at the end of 2011 and continued throughout the 2012/13 period. An exchange rate of 7.88 of the Moroccan dirham against the United States dollar as at 1 September 2011 was applied when preparing the cost estimates for the 2012/13 financial period. As at 1 May 2012, the exchange rate had evolved to 8.44. In its previous reports on cross-cutting issues (A/66/718

and A/67/780), the Advisory Committee expressed the view that, in the light of the time lag between budget preparation and the start of the financial period, on a pilot basis, information on the impact of the most recent exchange rates should be provided to the General Assembly at the time of its consideration of peacekeeping budget proposals. The Advisory Committee considers that its earlier views remain valid and reiterates that request.

6. The comments of the Advisory Committee on the information presented in the performance report on individual objects of expenditure can be found, where relevant, in the discussion of the proposed budget for the period from 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015.

III. Financial position and information on performance for the current period

7. The Advisory Committee was informed that, as at 11 February 2014, a total of $1,020,092,100 had been assessed on Member States in respect of MINURSO since its inception. Payments received as at the same date amounted to $972,134,200, leaving an outstanding balance of $47,957,900. The Committee was also informed that payments totalling $809,669 had been made in January 2014 for troop costs up to 31 October 2013, and that an amount of $77,200 was owed for the period from 1 November 2013 to 31 January 2014. As at 31 December 2013, contingent-owned equipment had been certified up to 30 September 2013 and paid up to 16 November 2010, and the balance owed amounted to $531,000. As at 10 February 2014, taking into account a three-month operating reserve of $14,462,900 (excluding reimbursements for troop-contributing countries), the Mission had a cash shortfall of $5,562,900.

8. The Advisory Committee notes that MINURSO continues to have outstanding contributions and an unfavourable cash position. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was provided with the following table showing total troop costs and payments made since 2000.

Total troop costs (including regular and supplemental payments in the relevant years)

(Thousands of United States dollars)

	2000	*2001*	*2002*	*2003*	*2004*	*2005*	*2006*	*2007*	*2008*	*2009*	*2010*	*2011*	*2012*	*2013*	*2014*
Owed as at 1 January	726.6	92.8	92.3	217.7	509.6	792.0	1 074.4	1 362.8	1 648.8	1 937.1	2 230.1	53.5	254.3	562.1	863.3
Estimated amounts owed	277.0	274.1	288.3	291.8	282.4	282.4	288.4	286.0	288.3	293.0	292.4	301.3	307.8	301.2	23.5
Less: payments made during the year	910.9	274.5	162.9	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2 468.9	100.6	–	–	809.7
Balance as at 31 December	**92.8**	**92.3**	**217.7**	**509.6**	**792.0**	**1 074.4**	**1 362.8**	**1 648.8**	**1 937.1**	**2 230.1**	**53.5**	**254.3**	**562.1**	**863.3**	**77.2**[a]

[a] As at 27 February 2014.

9. **While noting that there has been some improvement, the Advisory Committee reiterates its concern over the continuing precariousness of the financial situation of MINURSO and its negative impact on timely reimbursements to troop-contributing countries (A/67/780/Add.4, para. 11). The Committee further recalls the repeated calls by the General Assembly for all Member States to fulfil their financial obligations on time, in full and without conditions (most recently in its resolution 68/246).**

10. The Advisory Committee was provided with information on the incumbency of MINURSO military and civilian personnel for the period from 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2014, as at 31 January 2014, as follows:

Category	*Authorized*[a]	*Encumbered*	*Vacancy rate (percentage)*
Military observers	203	196	3
Military contingent personnel	27	27	–
United Nations police	12	4	67
Posts			
International staff	99	96	3
National staff	176	164	7
General temporary assistance			
National staff	1	1	–
United Nations Volunteers	16	15	6

[a] Represents the highest authorized strength for the period.

11. The Advisory Committee was also provided with information showing current and projected expenditure for the period from 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2014, with reasons for variances. Expenditure for the period as at 31 January 2014 amounted to $38,664,500 gross ($37,759,300 net) against an appropriation of $58,404,000 gross ($55,982,000 net). At the end of the current financial period, the Mission projects total expenditure of $58,104,700, reflecting an underexpenditure of $299,300, or 0.5 per cent, of the approved appropriation for the 2013/14 financial period.

12. The Advisory Committee was informed that the projected expenditures for 2013/14 reflected the combined effect of both lower and higher than budgeted requirements under various categories of expenditure. Underexpenditures were projected under: (a) United Nations police, owing to a projected 50 per cent delayed deployment factor compared with the budgeted full incumbency level as well as the non-deployment of six additional United Nations police personnel (see para. 15 below) owing to the temporary suspension of activities related to confidence-building measures; (b) national General Service staff, owing mainly to a projected vacancy rate of 6 per cent compared with the budgeted vacancy rate of 4 per cent; (c) United Nations Volunteers, owing to a projected vacancy rate of 10 per cent as compared with the budgeted vacancy rate of 6 per cent; and (d) air transportation, owing to lower operating costs in the new helicopter contract, which came into effect in September 2013. The reduced requirements were expected to be largely offset by higher than budgeted requirements under: (a) facilities and infrastructure, attributable to increased requirements for new hard-wall kitchens to replace obsolete

tented kitchens at seven team sites, and higher than planned costs of fuel; (b) communications, owing to the replacement of obsolete radios and switchboard; and (c) information technology, owing to increased requirements for updating backup facilities and network switches.

IV. Proposed budget for the period from 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015

A. Mandate and planned results

13. The mandate of MINURSO was established by the Security Council in its resolution 690 (1991). The most recent extension of the mandate, to 30 April 2014, was authorized by the Council in its resolution 2099 (2013). In his report on the proposed budget, the Secretary-General indicates that, during the budget period, MINURSO would: continue its observation and monitoring activities to ensure the compliance of the parties with the ceasefire agreement; provide continued support to the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General in the performance of his functions; facilitate the work of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in implementing and seeking to expand the programme of confidence-building measures through the provision of United Nations police officers to monitor family visits; provide logistical support to the African Union representatives in Laayoune; and conduct surveys and maintain the volume of clearance of hazardous areas contaminated by mines and other explosive remnants of war on the east side of the berm in cooperation with a non-governmental organization.

14. The Secretary-General further indicates that the Mission faces an increase in monitoring challenges related to the growth in military dispositions west of the berm in response to regional threats, and that as at 30 June 2013, the military component of MINURSO stood at its full authorized strength of 231 personnel. The Secretary-General also indicates that security has become a growing concern, for both the parties and the Mission, and that in April 2013, by its resolution 2099 (2013), the Security Council approved an increase in the strength of United Nations police officers from 6 to 12 in MINURSO to implement the expanded family visit programme. In his report to the Security Council on the situation concerning Western Sahara (S/2013/220, para. 100), the Secretary-General signalled that, should the Council approve his recommendation on the increase in the authorized strength of United Nations police officers to assist UNHCR in the confidence-building measures programme, the cost of maintaining the Mission until 30 June 2013 would be limited to the amounts approved by the Assembly. With regard to the 2013/14 period, the Secretary-General had indicated that the proposed budget, based on the authorized strength of 6 United Nations police officers, had already been submitted for consideration by the Assembly, but that he would advise the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Assembly, as necessary.

15. During its consideration of the budget proposals of the Secretary-General for MINURSO for 2014/15, the Advisory Committee was informed, upon enquiry, that it had not been apprised of the decision of the Security Council to increase the authorized strength of the United Nations police from 6 to 12 personnel for the

2013/14 period because the Secretary-General did not need to seek additional funding, given that the additional annual requirement, estimated at some $150,000 for full incumbency, could be absorbed by the Mission in 2013/14. Furthermore, in the end, the six additional police officers were not deployed (see para. 12 above). **The Advisory Committee considers that, regardless of the capacity of the Mission to absorb additional requirements in 2013/14, it should have been apprised of the increase in the authorized strength of police personnel of the Mission, as indicated by the Secretary-General in his report to the Security Council. The Committee trusts the Secretary-General will take the necessary steps to ensure that such an omission will not recur.**

B. Resource requirements

16. The proposed budget for MINURSO for the period from 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015 amounts to $54,019,300 gross ($51,728,800 net), representing a decrease of $4,384,700, or 7.5 per cent, in gross terms, compared with the appropriation of $58,404,000 for 2013/14. The Advisory Committee notes that compared with the projected expenditure of $58,104,700 for 2013/14 (see para. 11 above), the proposed decrease in resources for 2014/15 would amount to $4,085,400, or 7.0 per cent, of the 2013/14 appropriation. This decrease is attributable mainly to: (a) decreased provisions for civilian personnel owing to a reduction of 14 posts, including 8 international and 5 national General Service posts; and (b) air transportation, related mostly to lower market rates for the rental and operation of helicopters. The reduced requirements are partially offset by increases under: (a) official travel; (b) ground transportation, owing to the replacement of 28 light passenger vehicles and an ambulance; and (c) communications and information technology, owing to the replacement of obsolete equipment and an allocation of indirect costs to support Umoja and other information systems in the field. Detailed information on the financial resources requested and an analysis of the variances are provided in sections II and III of the report of the Secretary-General on the proposed budget (A/68/699).

17. The Advisory Committee notes that for the 2014/15 period, budgeted voluntary contributions in kind would amount to $2,071,680, comprising contributions from the Government of Morocco ($1,718,345) and the Government of Algeria ($353,335) (A/68/699, sect. II.A). Furthermore, non-budgeted contributions under the status-of-mission agreement, in respect of accommodation, are estimated at $1,476,000, comprising contributions from the Government of Morocco ($1,394,000) and the Government of Algeria ($82,000) (A/68/699, sect II.B). **The Advisory Committee notes the continued voluntary contributions with appreciation.**

1. Military and police personnel

Category	*Approved 2013/14*	*Proposed 2014/15*[a]	*Variance*
Military observers	203	203	–
Military contingent personnel	27	27	–
United Nations police	12	12	–

[a] Represents the highest authorized strength for the period.

18. The proposed budget for military and police personnel for the period from 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015 amounts to $6,976,100, an increase of $190,400, or 2.8 per cent, compared with the apportionment of $6,785,700 for 2013/14. The increase is owing mainly to higher requirements for United Nations police as a result of the increase in the strength of United Nations police officers from 6 to 12 approved by the Security Council in its resolution 2099 (2013) for which no provision was made in the 2013/14 budget period (see para. 15 above).

Combat rations

19. During its consideration of the proposals of the Secretary-General for MINURSO, the Advisory Committee was informed that the military observers of the Mission were required to consume combat rations twice a month in order to ensure that the purchased stock of such rations was utilized prior to its expiry date. According to the Secretary-General, this practice allowed, inter alia, thorough cleaning of the kitchen, refrigerators, ration storage areas and dining halls on a monthly basis. The Advisory Committee was further informed that combat rations were purchased for long-range or overnight patrols during which the military observers had no access to fresh or cooked rations as well as to constitute strategic and operational rations reserves for situations in which the supply of fresh or cooked rations was interrupted owing to transportation issues and other emergencies. Each combat rations pack constituted a full day of rations per person per day, with 2,200 calories of full nutritional value. The Advisory Committee comments further on this matter in its report on the overview of the financing of United Nations peacekeeping operations (A/68/782).

2. Civilian personnel

Category	*Approved 2013/14*[a]	*Proposed 2014/15*[a]	*Variance*
International staff	99	91	(8)
National staff	176	171	(5)
Temporary positions	1	–	(1)
United Nations Volunteers	16	16	–
Total	**292**	**278**	**(14)**

[a] Represents the highest level of authorized/proposed strength.

20. The estimated requirement for civilian personnel for the period from 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015 amounts to $23,010,300, reflecting a decrease of $1,164,700, or 4.8 per cent, in comparison with the apportionment for 2012/13. The reduced requirements for 2014/15 are related mainly to a net reduction of 14 posts, including eight international and five national General Service posts and one temporary position, and the conversion to national General Service posts of four Field Service posts and one national General Service temporary position, offset in part by increased requirements relating to revised salary scales for national staff, and a 3 per cent appreciation of the rate for the Moroccan dirham against the United Nations dollar that was applied in 2013/14.

21. The vacancy factors applied to the cost estimates for civilian personnel remain unchanged compared with the budgeted vacancy factors for 2013/14, and are as

follows: 3 per cent for international staff, 4 per cent for national General Service staff and 6 per cent for United Nations Volunteers. The proposed vacancy factors are explained in paragraph 45 of the proposed budget (A/68/699).

22. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was provided with the following table showing the authorized, actual and proposed vacancy rates for the 2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15 periods by category of personnel. The Committee notes that, for the current period, as at 31 March 2014, actual vacancy rates for United Nations police and national General Service staff stood at 33.3 per cent and 7.5 per cent, respectively.

Authorized, actual and proposed vacancy rates for 2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15 by category of personnel

	2012/13		*2013/14*			*2014/15*
Category of personnel	*Authorized average*	*Actual average*	*Authorized average*	*Actual as of 31 March 2014*	*Actual average as of 31 March 2014*	*Proposed average*
Military and police personnel						
Military observers	2	5.4	2	3	2	2
Military contingents	0	0	0	0	3.7	0
United Nations police	0	0	0	33.3[a]	16.7	0
Government-provided personnel	80	60	60	70	60	60
Civilian personnel						
International staff	2	6	3	2	3	3
National Professional Officers	0	0	0	0	0	0
National General Service	5	5.7	4	7.5	6.3	4
United Nations Volunteers	2	18.8	6	6.3	12.5	6
Temporary positions (general temporary assistance)						
National staff	0	0	0	100	0	0

[a] The vacancy rate was calculated using the planned authorized strength of 6 United Nations police officers. At the increased authorized level of 12 United Nations police officers, approved by the Security Council in its resolution 2099 (2013), the actual vacancy rate as at 31 March 2014 and actual average vacancy rate from 1 July 2013 to 31 March 2014 would be 66.7 per cent and 58.3 per cent, respectively.

23. The Advisory Committee reiterates its view that the delayed deployment factors and vacancy rates to be applied should be based on fully justified budgetary assumptions that take into account both historical data and foreseeable factors. In this regard, clear justification should be provided in budget documents for the rates used, particularly when they differ from the actual rates at the time of budget

preparation (see A/66/718, para. 36). **In view of the foregoing, the Advisory Committee recommends that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to apply vacancy factors of 15 per cent for United Nations police and 5 per cent for national General Service staff of MINURSO for the 2014/15 period.**

24. The Secretary-General indicates that the staffing proposals are based mainly on a review conducted by MINURSO of its mission support functions, which resulted in proposals for the nationalization of four Field Service posts to four national General Service posts that will allow for capacity-building of national staff and create opportunities for upward mobility. **The Advisory Committee has consistently emphasized the importance of using national staff, as appropriate, and of building national capacity. It encourages the Secretary-General to continue to seek opportunities for the nationalization of posts, as appropriate, in the context of the civilian staffing review referred to by the Secretary-General in his report on the overview of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations (A/68/731, paras. 171-175). A summary of the proposed post changes is provided in annex I to the present report.**

Recommendations on posts

Conversion

25. A total of five posts, comprising four Field Service posts and one national general temporary assistance position, are proposed for conversion to national General Service posts to allow for capacity-building of national staff and create opportunities for upward mobility, as follows:

(a) In the Human Resources Section, one Field Service post of Travel Assistant is proposed for conversion to a national General Service post;

(b) In the Transport Section, one Field Service post of Dispatcher is proposed for conversion to a national General Service post;

(c) In the Aviation Section, one Field Service post of Movement Control Assistant is proposed for conversion to a national General Service post;

(d) In the Property Management Section, one Field Service post of Movement Control Assistant is proposed for conversion to a national General Service post;

(e) In the Property Management Section, one temporary national General Service position of Documents Assistant is proposed for conversion to a national General Service post owing to the continuing nature of the function.

The Advisory Committee has no objection to the conversion of those posts, as proposed by the Secretary-General.

Abolishment

26. The Secretary-General is proposing to abolish, mainly in the support component, a total of 14 posts, comprising 4 Field Service posts and 10 national General Service posts. He indicates that the functions of the abolished posts will be absorbed by existing staff. The posts proposed for abolishment are as follows:

(a) In the Tindouf Liaison Office, two national General Service posts, one of Maintenance Worker and one of Facilities Maintenance Assistant;

(b) In the Office of the Chief of Mission Support, one Field Service post of Aviation Safety Assistant;

(c) In the Office of the Chief of Technical Services, one national General Service post of Administrative Assistant;

(d) In the Procurement Section, one national General Service post of Procurement Assistant;

(e) In the Engineering Section, one Field Service post of Electrical Technician and one national General Service post of Heavy Duty Vehicle Operator;

(f) In the Communications and Information Technology Section, one Field Service post of Satellite Technician and one national General Service post of Billing Assistant;

(g) In the Transport Section, one Field Service post of Driver and one national General Service post of Heavy Duty Vehicle Operator;

(h) In the Joint Logistics Section, one national General Service post of Fuel Assistant;

(i) In the Aviation Section, one national General Service post of Materials and Assets Assistant;

(j) In the Property Management Section, one national General Service post of Claims Assistant.

The Advisory Committee has no objection to the abolishment of those posts, as proposed by the Secretary-General.

Redeployment

27. The Secretary-General proposes to redeploy two national General Service posts of Heavy Vehicle Operator from the Transport Section to the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General as Drivers to regularize existing arrangements.

28. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was informed that the existing arrangements, whereby two Heavy Vehicle Operators attached to the Transport Section serve as Drivers in the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, had been in place since 2001, spanning the tenure of multiple Special Representatives of the Secretary-General. **The Advisory Committee shares the view of the Secretary-General that the discrepancy between the approved staffing table and existing arrangements should be rectified. Accordingly, the necessary adjustments should be made, either to the posts or to the existing arrangements. Based on the justifications provided, the Committee recommends that the General Assembly approve the proposed redeployments. It trusts that the Secretary-General will henceforth ensure that all changes to the functions and locations of posts are submitted for consideration by the General Assembly in a timely manner, so as to ensure that the approved staffing table of the Mission and the effective functions and locations of its posts are properly aligned.**

Government-provided personnel

29. The Secretary-General proposes the continuation of a total of 10 Government-provided personnel in 2014/15. Upon enquiry, as to the reasons for the high vacancy factor (60 per cent) applied to this category of personnel, the Advisory Committee was informed that the personnel in question were provided by the African Union to staff an African Union Office. The Office was formed in 1991 as part of the initial establishment of MINURSO, which itself had been based on an African Union settlement/peace plan, and all posts had been filled initially. The functions of the posts were related to the observation and monitoring of the identification process and, eventually, the referendum. As some of those activities have now been completed, at present the Office consisted of four staff, comprising one Senior Representative, one Senior Political Affairs Officer, one Political Affairs Officer and one Secretary. The functions of the current staff of the Office were to provide advice to MINURSO on African Union-related issues and to ensure that the African Union was kept informed of activities related to MINURSO. The Advisory Committee was further informed that some of the staff of the African Union Office were senior officials at the level of ambassador. The Committee comments further on Government-provided personnel in its report on the overview of the financing of United Nations peacekeeping operations (A/68/782).

3. Operational costs

(United States dollars)

	Approved 2013/14	*Proposed 2014/15*	*Variance*
Operational costs	27 443 300	24 032 900	(3 410 400)

30. The estimated requirements for operational costs in the period from 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015 amount to $24,032,900, representing a decrease of $3,410,400, or 12.4 per cent, compared with the apportionment for 2013/14.

Official travel

31. Estimated requirements for official travel for the 2014/15 period amount to $752,000, an increase of $36,900, or 5.2 per cent, compared with the apportionment for 2013/14. Explanations on the increased requirements are given in paragraph 59 of the budget document. The Secretary-General indicates that the increased requirements for travel are related, inter alia to: (a) increased interest in Western Sahara, which in turn requires more frequent travel of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the Chief of Staff; (b) travel of substantive component staff members to participate in the Human Resources Expert Panel, as well as travel of staff of the Public Information Office and the Office of Legal Affairs to attend annual conferences; and (c) provision of travel related to Umoja, including training sessions. The Advisory Committee was informed that the total number of planned trips would increase from 86 in 2013/14 to 100 in 2014/15.

32. **While recognizing that the travel needs of the Mission may evolve and grow, the Advisory Committee is of the view that the explanation provided by the Secretary-General does not justify the increase of 5.2 per cent in the proposed requirements for official travel for 2014/15, taking into account, in particular, the increased opportunities for using alternative means of**

communication, given the reductions expected pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 65/268 and 67/254. The Advisory Committee therefore recommends that the General Assembly maintain resources for official travel for 2014/15 at the same level as for 2013/14. The Committee comments further on this subject in its report on the overview of the financing of United Nations peacekeeping operations (A/68/782).

Facilities and infrastructure

33. The Advisory Committee notes from the indicators of achievement related to Facilities and Infrastructure under expected accomplishment 3.1: increased efficiency and effectiveness of logistical, administrative and security support to the Mission, in the performance report (A/68/608), that the replacement of the soft-wall accommodation with hard-wall containerized accommodation in one team site and the replacement of soft-wall kitchens with hard-wall kitchens in three team sites could not be implemented in 2012/13. Upon enquiry as to the status of those activities, the Advisory Committee was informed that the replacement of the soft-wall accommodation was ongoing and was expected to be completed by 30 April 2014, as indicated in the performance report (A/68/608).

34. With regard to the replacement of kitchens, the Advisory Committee was informed that eight out of nine kitchens received from the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad had been damaged in transit and were subject to an insurance claim. The Mission was able to assemble one serviceable kitchen from parts of the eight damaged kitchens and to install serviceable kitchens in two team sites. As indicated in paragraph 12 above, the Mission intends to install new hard-wall kitchens at the remaining seven team sites during the current budget period. **The Advisory Committee trusts that the Secretary-General will ensure the timely submission of all insurance claims in order to expedite reimbursement from insurance companies, as well as the installation of kitchens in the seven remaining team sites.**

Ground transportation

35. Estimated requirements for ground transportation for the 2014/15 period amount to $1,784,200, an increase of $223,100, or 14.3 per cent, compared with the apportionment for 2013/14. This increase is attributable primarily to increased requirements for the replacement of 28 light passenger vehicles and an ambulance, offset in part by reduced requirements for spare parts. In paragraph 17 of the budget document, the Secretary-General states that, taking into account prolonged use in severe conditions, the life expectancy of the vehicles has expired, and that during the reporting period the Mission would also write off a total of 47 vehicles in order to enhance compliance with standard ratios. The projected holdings of United Nations-owned light-passenger vehicles are expected to decrease from 203 at the beginning of the period to 184 following the acquisition of 28 vehicles and write-off of 47 vehicles during the 2014/15 period.

36. With regard to the age profile of the vehicles, the Advisory Committee was informed that the Mission's fleet comprised 51 vehicles purchased in 2006, 6 in 2007, 61 in 2008, 26 in 2009, 53 in 2010, 26 in 2011 and 1 in 2012. The Committee was further informed that the Mission followed the standard guidelines issued by the Department of Field Support for the replacement of vehicles, based on age and

mileage as well as on technical condition and serviceability. As to the vehicles proposed for write-off, the Committee was informed that all 47 would have reached the required age or mileage limits by 2015. Furthermore, repair of the vehicles was no longer economical given their technical condition resulting from accidents, damage, fatigue and wear. The Committee addresses this issue in further detail in its report on the overview of the financing of United Nations peacekeeping operations (A/68/782).

Air transportation

37. Estimated requirements for air transportation for the 2014/15 period amount to $11,036,300, a decrease of $3,898,400, or 26.1 per cent, compared with the apportionment for 2013/14. From the supplementary information provided to it, the Advisory Committee notes that the reduced requirements are attributable largely to the lower market rate for the rental and operation of helicopters ($4,039,600). The decrease is offset in part by higher contractual costs for the rental and operation of fixed-wing aircraft ($132,500). In 2014/15, the Mission will operate and maintain two fixed-wing and two rotary-wing aircraft, as well as four aviation fuel stations.

Information technology

38. The Advisory Committee notes an increase in the requirements for information technology in the 2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15 periods, as follows:

(a) In the 2012/13 period, actual requirements for information technology amounted to $1,407,500, reflecting an increase of $461,400, or 48.8 per cent, over the appropriation of $946,100, owing to the replacement of desktops and laptops as well as requirements to support Umoja and IPSAS (A/68/608, para. 39);

(b) In the current period, projected expenditures under information technology amount to $1,161,000, reflecting an increase of $151,500, or 15 per cent, over the appropriation of $1,009,500, owing to increased requirements for updating backup facilities and network switches;

(c) For 2014/15, the Secretary-General proposes a total amount of $1,261,600, which represents an increase of $252,100, or 25 per cent, compared with the appropriation for 2013/14.

39. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was provided with the following table showing the cost of communications and information technology equipment that was replaced due to obsolescence over the past five-year period (2009/10 to 2013/14) as well as the costs for the replacement of equipment to ensure compatibility with the Umoja software and to support implementation of IPSAS and Umoja.

Costs of communications and information technology equipment replaced due to obsolescence and to ensure compatibility with Umoja

(Thousands of United States dollars)

Communications	*2009/10*	*2010/11*	*2011/12*	*2012/13*	*2013/14**	*2014/15*
Budgeted	635.4	516.7	495.9	200.2	176.4	351.6
Standard replacement	733.0	200.2	1 048.8	200.0	139.5	303.6
Umoja-related replacement				159.2	170.0	48.0

Information technology	*2009/10*	*2010/11*	*2011/12*	*2012/13*	*2013/14**	*2014/15*
Budgeted	433.0	385.3	478.5	337.9	173.0	292.2
Standard replacement	398.7	337.9	470.1	337.7	381.4	245.6
Umoja-related replacement				365.0	164.0	46.6

* As at January 2014.

40. The Advisory Committee comments further on information technology, communications and Umoja-related requirements in its report on the overview of the financing of United Nations peacekeeping operations (A/68/782).

Mine detection and mine-clearing services

41. Information on mine detection and mine-clearing services is provided in paragraphs 50 to 52 of the budget document. The estimated requirements for this activity are included under other supplies, services and equipment, and amount to $3,128,600 for the 2014/15 period, an increase of $28,600, or 0.9 per cent, compared with the apportionment for 2013/14. The Secretary-General indicates that the Mission envisages clearance through subsurface demining of 8,550,000 m^2 during the budget period. In comparison, a total of 916,021 m^2 was cleared during the performance period and 2,424,657 m^2 as of 31 January 2014 during the current period. The Secretary-General indicates that the increase in productivity is owing to the introduction of new mechanical assets that can achieve faster and more cost-effective clearance of suspected hazardous areas.

42. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was provided with a summary of planned and actual mine detection and clearance operations over the five-year period from 2009/10 to 2013/14, which is provided in annex II to the present report. With regard to mine action methodology, the Committee recalls its observations in the context of the budget proposal for 2012/13, in which it noted significant variances in the actual and planned areas of land for mine clearance (A/66/718/Add.6, paras. 35 and 36). **The Advisory Committee would find it helpful if further explanations were provided on those variances as well as on the factors that come into play when setting mine clearance targets.** It addresses this issue in more detail in its report on the overview of the financing of United Nations peacekeeping operations (A/68/782).

C. Other matters

43. Upon enquiry, the Advisory Committee was provided with an update on the services provided to MINURSO by the Regional Service Centre and the Regional Procurement Office in Entebbe. It was informed that one contract had been established by the Regional Procurement Office thus far, and that the Mission was exploring the possibility of concluding further contracts through the Office. Services provided to MINURSO by the Regional Service Centre at Entebbe included the provision of certain training courses attended by the staff of the Mission as well as the processing of education grants. The Mission further indicated that, despite its remote geographical location, it would continue to explore the viability of increasing the number of services that can be supported by the Regional Service Centre at Entebbe. **The Advisory Committee emphasizes the need to ensure that the provision of such services yields efficiencies and remains operationally effective. It encourages the Mission to continue to pursue all efforts to find further efficiencies, drawing upon the positive experiences of other peacekeeping missions.** The Advisory Committee will further develop its views on the role of the Global Service Centre at Brindisi, Italy, and the operations of the Regional Service Centre at Entebbe in its report on the overview of the financing of United Nations peacekeeping operations (A/68/782).

V. Conclusion

44. The actions to be taken by the General Assembly in connection with the financing of MINURSO for the period from 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2013 are indicated in paragraph 41 of the performance report (A/68/608). **The Advisory Committee recommends that the unencumbered balance of $1,771,600 for the period from 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2013, as well as other income/adjustments in the amount of $1,014,100 for the period ended 30 June 2012, be credited to Member States.**

45. The actions to be taken by the General Assembly in connection with the financing of MINURSO for the period from 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015 are indicated in paragraph 67 of the proposed budget (A/68/699). **Taking into account its recommendations in paragraphs 23 and 32 above, the Advisory Committee recommends that the overall requirement proposed by the Secretary-General be reduced by $139,700. Accordingly, the Committee recommends that the General Assembly appropriate an amount of $53,879,600 for the maintenance of MINURSO for the 12-month period from 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015 and assess this amount at a monthly rate of $4,489,967, should the Security Council decide to extend the mandate of MINURSO.**

Documentation

- Budget performance of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara for the period from 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2013 (A/68/608)
- Budget for the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara for the period from 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015 (A/68/699)
- Report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions on the budget performance for the period from 1 July 2011 to 30 June 2012 and proposed budget for the period from 1 July 2013 to 30 June 2014 of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (A/67/780/Add.4)
- Financial report and audited financial statements for the 12-month period from 1 July 2012 to 30 June 2013 and report of the Board of Auditors, Volume II, United Nations peacekeeping operations (A/68/5 (Vol. II))
- Security Council resolution 2099 (2013)
- General Assembly resolution 67/283 on the financing of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara

Annex I

Summary of proposed post changes for MINURSO for the period from 1 July 2014 to 30 June 2015

Office Section/Unit	*Number*	*Level*	*Description*
Executive direction and management			
Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary- General			
	2	NS	Redeployment of 2 national General Service posts from the Transport Section of the support component
	+2		
Tindouf Liaison Office			
	-2	NS	Abolishment of 2 national General Service posts
	-2		
Component 3: support			
Office of the Chief of Mission Support			
	-1	FS	Abolishment of 1 Field Service post
	-1		
Office of Chief Technical Services			
	-1	NS	Abolishment of 1 national General Service post
	-1		
Human Resources Section			
	-1	FS	Conversion of 1 Field Service post to a national General Service post
	+1	NS	Conversion of 1 Field Service post to a national General Service post
	–		
Procurement Section			
	-1	NS	Abolishment of 1 national General Service post
	-1		
Engineering Section			
	-1	FS	Abolishment of 1 Field Service post
	-1	NS	Abolishment of 1 national General Service post
	-2		
Communications and Information Technology Section			
	-1	FS	Abolishment of 1 Field Service post
	-1	NS	Abolishment of 1 national General Service post
	-2		

Office Section Unit	*Number*	*Level*	*Description*
Transport Section			
	-1	FS	Abolishment of 1 Field Service post
	-1	FS	Conversion of 1 Field Service post to a national General Service post
	+1	NS	Conversion of 1 Field Service post to a national General Service post
	-1	NS	Abolishment of 1 national General Service post
	-2	NS	Redeployment of 2 national General Service posts to the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General
	-4		
Joint Logistics Operation Section			
	-1	NS	Abolishment of 1 national General Service post
	-1		
Aviation Section			
	-1	FS	Conversion of 1 Field Service post to a national General Service post
	+1	NS	Conversion of 1 Field Service post to a national General Service post
	-1	NS	Abolishment of 1 national General Service post
	-1		
Property Management Section			
	-1	FS	Conversion of 1 Field Service post to a national General Service post
	+1	NS	Conversion of 1 Field Service post to a national General Service post
	-1	GTA	Conversion of 1 national general temporary assistance position to a national General Service post
	+1	NS	Conversion of 1 national general temporary assistance position to a national General Service post
	-1	NS	Abolishment of 1 national General Service post
	-1		
Total			
International	-8		
National	-5		
United Nations Volunteers	–		
General temporary assistance	-1		
	-14		

Annex II

Planned and actual mine detection and clearance operations from 2009/10 to 2013/14

Fiscal year	*Planned clearance*	*Actual clearance*	*Planned expenditure (in United States dollars)*	*Actual expenditure (in United States dollars)*	*Notes*
2009/10	3,000,000 m^2	4,325,036 m^2	Services: 468,000 Supplies: 25,000 **Total: 490,000**	507,800 25,000 **532,800**	Clearance was focused primarily on Battle Area Clearance. That methodology allows for rapid clearance with less assets than manual minefield clearance.
2010/11	4,000,000 m^2	8,422,225 m^2	Services: 1,183,700 Supplies: 0 **Total: 1,183,700**	Same as planned	Clearance was focused mostly on Battle Area Clearance.
2011/12	750,000 m^2	3,500,000 m^2	Services: 2,306,900 Supplies: 0 **Total: 2,306,900**	Same as planned	Manual minefield clearance was planned for this phase, which is a much slower and more tedious process than on Battle Area Clearance. However, owing to discovery of more Battle Area Clearance areas, assets continued to be deployed for Battle Area Clearance and led to a significant increase relative to planned clearance figures.
2012/13	1,000,000 m^2	916,021 m^2	Services: 2,894,300 Supplies: 0 **Total: 2,894,300**	Same as planned	Clearance assets were used primarily for minefield clearance and not Battle Area Clearance. The decrease in the area cleared was owing to the delayed deployment of the mechanical demining asset due to a longer than planned customs clearance process.
2013/14	1,000,000 m^2	2,424,657 m^2 (as of 31/01/14)	Services: 3,100,000 Supplies: 0 **Total: 3,100,000**	Same as planned	Clearance assets are used primarily for minefield clearance and not Battle Area Clearance. Incorporation of the Vehicle Mounted Mine Detection System into clearance operations has resulted in a significant increase in clearance productivity.